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**STRATEGIC POTENTIAL OF THE LATE OTTOMAN EMPIRE**

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GEOSTRATEGIC CONTEXT

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**STRATEGIC POTENTIAL OF THE LATE OTTOMAN EMPIRE**

Modern Turkey is potentially the center of gravity of United States National Security Strategy in Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Middle East. As such, it is critical that the United States reengages Turkey bilaterally and through NATO to strengthen the entire region with democracy and economic reforms. A U.S. miscalculation of Turkey's potential and failure to address their internal problems could result in the missed opportunities to shape a secure and prosperous region, and indirectly set conditions for a stable Middle East.

This paper will analyze the strategic context of Turkey in relation to its diverse neighbors as well as national interests, threats, and opportunities as perceived by the Turks. The paper will conclude with a broad recommendation of a U.S. strategy to aid Turkey with internal reforms and regional security objectives.

**Strategic Context**

Turkey has emerged since 1923 as one of the most strategically important nations in the world. Its geopolitical and geostrategic location helped the United States through the Cold War and most recently supported us during the Gulf War.

Straddling Asia and Europe, Turkey currently lives in a tough neighborhood surrounded by Greece, Bulgaria, Georgia, Armenia, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Although confused whether to look east or west, Turkey has consistently remained loyal to the United States, and to her NATO allies. The United States cannot begin to address regional problems ranging from Europe to the Middle East without involvement and support from Turkey.

Turkey is truly a land of geographical and ethnic contrast. Approximately the size of Texas, Turkey has coastlines along the Mediterranean, Aegean, and Black Seas with coastal plains surrounding the agriculturally rich Anatolia heartland. The Anatolia area is key to Turkey's foreign policy and national security strategy. It lies in the center of historic invasion routes, provides land and sea routes for Middle East and Caspian oil, and controls the water flow from the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers to points south. Anatolia is framed with rugged mountains to the east, and to the north and south by the Seas with parallel mountain ranges, forest, and rivers. Regardless of politics or ethnic tensions, these natural barriers enhance Turkey's defense and force Turkey to look west for trade and security alliances.<sup>[1]</sup>

Turkey is a diverse nation whose 65.5 million population is 98 percent Sunni Muslim with Greek Orthodox, Jews, and Armenians listed as minorities under the constitution. A smaller number of Muslims are from the Alevi branch of Islam,

and the Kurdish ethnic group makes up approximately twelve million of the population. The official language is Turkish by constitutional law, but Kurdish and Arabic are spoken in rural mountainous areas.[\[2\]](#)

## **Historical and Religious Context**

To discuss the strategic potential of this region one must analyze the historical underpinnings and restraints imposed by strict secularism and improper civil-military relations.

Modern Turkey has historical roots dating back to 1055 when Seljuk Turks and Turkoman Tribal warriors marched into Persia and forced the Baghdad Caliph to recognize their nomadic tribe as protectors of Sunni Islam.[\[3\]](#) Their Sultan leader subsequently led a military expedition into Eastern Anatolia in 1071 and won a campaign against the Byzantines. This adventure established Islam in central Asia, which would eventually give birth to the Ottoman Empire. Osman, a Turkoman Tribal leader established Ottoman in 1299 and embarked on military adventures throughout the region that systematically defeated Byzantine and established an empire that incorporated the Balkans, Iraq, the Mediterranean to include northern fringes of Africa, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia.[\[4\]](#)

The next five centuries were characterized by constant war as Christians fought to block the Ottoman Empire's advances to the East. The brutality of the Christian crusaders during these campaigns instilled much of the animosity and militant

Islamic fundamentalism still seen today. Rather than uniting the Catholic and Orthodox Christians, the crusaders viciously attacked any village or enclave that did not resemble Western Catholicism, and drove a permanent wedge between the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches.<sup>[5]</sup>

Religious and ethnic differences intensified during the eighteenth century as Christians sought autonomy and independence. Russia was growing stronger during this period and began to exercise sovereignty over fringes of Ottoman territory occupied by the Christian majority. Interesting, Greek and Armenian merchants lived well and were treated well under protection of Ottoman law that conceded special autonomy to them out of economic and trade interests. The problem intensified as all Christians demanded similar levels of autonomy, and the Greek and Armenian areas of Anatolia sought independence. This was viewed by the Muslim Turks as a rebellion and was quickly suppressed. Matters became worse in 1881 when economic problems and failure of the Turks to pay their foreign debts resulted in European control of the empire's finances through establishment of a Public Debt Administration.<sup>[6]</sup> The Christians took advantage of this period under European control and forced the 'sick man of Europe' to concede and amend the constitution giving equal rights to minorities. Fearing further European encroachment and loss of sovereignty in Anatolia, the Turks initiated brutal engagements with the Kurdish Hamidiye Regiment against

Armenian nationalists resulting in the deaths of 20,000 Armenians.<sup>[7]</sup> The hatred intensified during the First World War when the Armenian Church announced its loyalty to Russia. Armenian militia then melded into the rough mountainous terrain and conducted guerrilla warfare against Ottoman forces. An Ottoman campaign in 1915 to counter the Armenian militia resulted in the forced migration and massacre of thousands of Armenians. Entire villages were seized, and children and women were taken into Kurdish tribes against their will. Historical accounts vary, but Armenian deaths are estimated as high as 800,000 with the Armenian militia responsible for 40,000 Muslim deaths.<sup>[8]</sup> This historical context laid the foundation for Turkey's suspicion of any foreign meddling or pressure into their internal affairs. The most dramatic evidence of this can be seen in Turkey's determination to quickly suppress the Kurdish Worker's Party (PKK) insurgency regardless of international pressure for human rights violations.<sup>[9]</sup>

Much of the roots of modern Turkey's religious and ethnic problems can be traced to the 1920 Treaty of Sevres, which was imposed on the Ottoman government following the defeat of World War I and organized the Ottoman territory along ethnic lines. However, the invasion by Greece fueled the passion of nationalism under the leadership of General Gazi Mustafa Kemal Pasa

“Ataturk”, who rallied the people around the stated goal of a multiethnic state of Anatolia. The Kurds were actually given more favorable conditions under the Treaty of Sevres by carving out a separate and self-ruling territory in the southeast mountainous region and Mosul Province, but they chose to support Ataturk believing they would benefit again from autonomy enjoyed under the Ottoman’s rule. This strong sense of nationalism was instrumental in winning the war of independence against the Greeks and establishing the new republic under the Treaty of Lausanne on 24 July 1923.[\[10\]](#)

The treaty granted complete sovereignty over the territory that makes up today’s modern Turkey. Greek and Turk delegates agreed to a border in Thrace, and Britain continued to occupy Mosul in Northern Iraq awaiting a decision by the League of Nations. It was also agreed that Alexandretta would remain with French Syria, and the Aegean Islands with Greece and Italy. Anatolia and Eastern Thrace were conceded to Turkey’s sovereignty, but there was no territory designated for the Armenians or Kurds. Instead, Turkey agreed to a stipulation in the treaty that it would protect its citizens to include all minorities regardless of race or religion.[\[11\]](#) However, the Kurds were never listed as a minority, and are currently not exempt from secular laws as are the Greek Orthodox, Jews, and Armenians.

The Treaty also forced the exchange between Greeks in Anatolia and Turkish



Muslims in Greece. Greeks in Istanbul and Muslims in northeast Greece, referred as Western Thrace, were allowed to maintain their residence. There is historical speculation that Turk expulsion of Armenians and Greeks was a strategy to ethnically segregate Anatolia for Muslim Turks. This animosity still exists today in the form of a strong movement by Armenians and other Christians who lobby in the U.S. and in Europe against the Turkish government for war crimes and for compensation for their property seized during World War I.[\[12\]](#)

It is within this historical context that modern Turkey emerged as a strong and independent nation formed around Ataturk's secular nationalism. Ataturk's vision of world peace would also serve as the cornerstone of Turkey's strategic role during the Cold War. Turkey joined NATO in 1952 and developed the second most powerful military in the alliance. Throughout the Cold War, Turkey anchored the Southern flank of NATO and controlled the strategic Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits. Turkey served as an invaluable strategic partner to the entire free world, and today continues to promote world peace through participation in UN and NATO peacekeeping missions. Unfortunately, Turkey is also the victim of internal problems and restraints that emerged since the end of the Cold War that thwart Turkey's ability to adapt and compete in the new European world order. Unless Turkey agrees to constitutional reforms, civil-military relations and human rights issues will continue as hurdles to membership in the European

## **Restraints to Reform (Civil-Military Relations and Human Rights)**

The emerging leaders of Turkey were elite bureaucrats and military officers who joined “father Turk” in the belief that in order for Turkey to become a modern nation Turkey must move closer in line with western culture and subordinate ethnic and religious identities to the control of the state. This reform became known as “Kemalism”, and was based on French republican nationalism and laicism, a form of secularism where religion is strictly controlled by the state. This included abolishment of the Caliphate, and all Muslim religious leaders were placed under the authority of the Republic of Turkey. All citizens were Turks without class distinctions, and were expected to speak and write Turkish. Arabic and Farsi were also purged from the official language, and citizens were encouraged to adopt western style dress and customs. [\[13\]](#) It could be argued that Ataturk’s form of nationalism was necessary at a very difficult time to form a new republic with a new sense of identity from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. However, Kemalism has failed to adapt in modern times to the basic spiritual and social needs of society. The Turkish people today strive to reconnect to their Islamic heritage or Kurdish culture.

The Turkish military therefore was transformed into a Kemalist bureaucratic instrument to enforce the rules of the modern secular society. Although extremely competent and professional, the military is not subordinate to civilian

leadership and considers itself as the protectors of the republic as envisioned by Ataturk. As a result, the military routinely intervenes when it considers domestic religious practices, politics, or ethnic movements are out of line with Kemalism.

There have been four military coups since 1960 to defeat what the military considered domestic national security threats.<sup>[14]</sup> With their deep commitment and loyalty to Kemalism and the vision of Ataturk, officers equate Islam with irrationality and believe religious opposition to Turkey's secular democracy pose the greatest danger to the state. This responsibility is based on Article 35 of the Internal Service Act, which directs the military to protect the Turkish Fatherland and the Republic of Turkey defined by the constitution as a secular republic.<sup>[15]</sup> Recent examples of the military influence on civilian leadership can be seen in the pressure applied during 1996 to 1998 against the Islamic oriented Refah Welfare Party led by Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan. The Constitutional Court supported these actions by disbanding the Party in January 1998 based on its attempt to establish Turkey as an Islamic state. Subsequently, three new strictly secular parties then emerged under the watchful eye of the military.<sup>[16]</sup> Another major restraint to Turkey's acceptance by the West is its human rights violations regarding the Kurds. The Kurds have historically served as faithful citizens during both peace and war. The Ottoman Empire granted them

autonomy in exchange for their loyalty and warrior skills. It was this sense of loyalty and warrior spirit of the Kurds that enabled Ataturk to win Turkey's independence in 1922. Historians are unsure why Ataturk abandoned his original goals of a multicultural and pluristic society. There are many factors that shaped events during this period such as the exchange of Muslims and non-Muslims and stipulation of what constituted minorities in the constitution. The intellectual elite also decided to name Turkey after the geographical region for all Turkish people, and feared acknowledging specific ethnic groups would undermine the state. There is also speculation that Kurds may have lost their autonomy when Turkey lost the Province of Mosul in Northern Iraq, which has served as a Kurdish enclave for centuries.<sup>[17]</sup> The Mosul area and adjacent Southeastern Turkey continue to serve today as a Kurd stronghold and basis for government provocation.

The recent Kurdish rebellion and insurgency took root in 1980 following the government's decision to ban the Kurds from speaking their own language. Names of Kurdish towns were changed and parents were required by law to rename their children. It is ironic that Kurdish fathers, who out of loyalty enlisted their sons into the Turkish Army in 1974 in support of the Cyprus conflict, were now forced to take up arms against the same army. Abdullah Ocalan formed the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) in 1978 around a Marxism-Leninism philosophy with a secessionist goal of forming a separate Kurdistan state. Their strategy was

a protracted popular war by use of guerilla warfare and terrorism. However, this strategy of violence worked against them by alienating the Turkish people as well as provoking the full military strength and resources of the Turkish government. The PKK use of terrorism and hit-and-run tactics in the southeast mountains also frustrated the Turkish military, and actually allowed them to obtain the upper hand until Turkey properly trained police and counterinsurgency units in the mid 1990s.[\[18\]](#)

Although the PKK was a terrorist organization and threat to national security, the Turkish government overreacted, and made the mistake of alienating the Kurds and non-Kurds alike through human rights abuses of innocent citizens. Routinely, a PKK attack or threat was met with an overwhelming government response of military, police, and helicopter gun ships. A 1996 U.S. State Department report indicated that government forces had forced the evacuation of 2,297 Kurdish villages and migration of two million Kurds from their homes. Alleged casualties from the counterinsurgency are estimated at 30,000 with a quarter of this figure being innocent civilians caught in cross fires or tortured for suspected PKK activity. Reports also indicate that an additional 10,000 civilians were mysteriously killed for passive support of the PKK .[\[19\]](#)

Today, the Turkish government has control of the Southeast Kurdish area, and the

capture and extradition of Ucalan has effectively ended the PKK insurgency for the time being. However, if the Turkish government fails to address the Kurdish issues and accept a pluristic society, they will continue to be plagued by organizations currently smoldering in the smoke of the PKK's defeat simply awaiting another charismatic leader and opportunity to move against government oppression. While the PKK is unable to become an effective insurgency without outside state sponsored support from Syria, Iran, and Iraq, this support tarnished relations and almost resulted in war with Syria. As outlined in the next section, Turkey's relations with its tough neighbors are anything but cordial.

### **Turkey's Strategic Environment**

Turkey's influence goes far beyond its immediate neighbors. Its ethnic and religious diversity has developed ties with Muslims in the Caucasus, Central Asia, Balkans, and the Middle East. Turkey is often referred to as a "role model" for other Muslim states as it is the only democratic Muslim state and the only Muslim state that is a NATO member. Turkey has provided military and police forces to all UN and NATO peacekeeping operations in the Balkans, and trained and equipped the Bosnian Croat Army as requested by the United States. To the chagrin of Greece, Turkey has developed ties with Muslims in practically every nation in the region to include Greece and Bulgaria, and established military training and economic agreements with Albania.[\[20\]](#)

## Azerbaijan and Georgia

Turkey has grown extremely close to the Muslim-Turkic state of Azerbaijan since gaining its independence from the former Soviet Union. Huge oil and natural gas resources could bring Azerbaijan \$2 billion annually; however, geopolitical constraints by Russia over Georgia and Armenia are working to spoil lucrative \$500 million transit fees as well as deprive Turkey of badly needed energy resources. Russia desires the pipeline to run north to the Port of Sopsa in Georgia and then ship oil out through the Bosphorus.<sup>[21]</sup> Negotiations are currently attempting to strike a deal involving a western route pipeline that would originate in Baku then northwest through T'bilisi Georgia and then out through Ceyhan, Turkey on the Mediterranean.<sup>[22]</sup> As of 10 February 01, Chevron Oil Company entered into negotiations with BP to construct the pipeline with possible branch plans to carry oil from the rich Tengiz fields in Kazakhstan. Depending on a successful engineering study, construction will begin in 2002 at a projected cost of \$2.5 billion.<sup>[23]</sup>

## Armenia

Armenia has made diplomatic gestures toward Turkey over the last few years; however, historical animosity, Russian influence, and tensions with Azerbaijan over secessionist efforts of the Armenian enclave in Nargorno-

Karabkh will most likely prevent near term economic ties or pipeline negotiations. Turkey contemplated providing military assistance to the Nargorno-Karabkh conflict in 1993, but calculated this action would bring war with Armenia and possibly draw a Russian military response. The Turkish border with Armenia remains closed.[\[24\]](#)

## **Iran**

While Iran has always served as an important trading partner with Turkey, both nations remain suspicious of each other. Turkey suspects Iran supported the PKK and Iran accuses Turkey of support to the Iranian-Azerbaijan separatist movement. Both nations, however, would benefit from a gas-oil pipeline project, which was originally negotiated in 1996 by the ousted Prime Minister Erbakan of the Islamic Rafah Party.[\[25\]](#) This deal would bring oil to Turkey cheaper than the Azerbaijan project, and would lessen Turkey's vulnerability to Russian influence. The major constraint is violation of U.S. sanctions against Iran and the fear of opening relations too closely with a militant Islamic state.

## **Iraq**

There is some speculation that Iraq has viewed Turkey with territorial expansion since losing the Mosul territory in 1923. This Northern Iraqi province is rich in oil resources, and to Turkey's dismay, has served as a Kurdish enclave and potential road to Kurdistan. Turkey's Southeastern Anatolian Project (GAP)



that restricts water flow along the Euphrates River also causes tension. The region also has historical significance for Iraq as the “Upper Mesopotamia”, and sacred ground of ancient civilization.[\[26\]](#)

Although suspicious of each other, Turkey and Iraq were avid trading partners until the Gulf War. In support of the U.S. and Arab Coalition, President Ozal immediately ended this relationship by agreeing to cease all trade and turned off the Iraqi oil pipeline that provided the majority of Turkey’s petroleum. To date, this support to the overall UN effort has cost Turkey approximately \$30 billion in lost revenue. [\[27\]](#) Turkey also provided Incirlik Air Base for the air campaign, and indirectly served as a diversion by causing Iraqi Forces to maintain a sizeable defense to protect their northern flank. Although Turkey continues to support sanctions against Iraq, it fears Northern Iraq has become a safe haven for the PKK and other Kurdish tribes to operate under the cover of Operation Northern Watch. Turkey now calls for the relaxing of sanctions so Iraq may regain control of the North.[\[28\]](#) Turkey also recently decided to reinstate their Ambassador in Baghdad.

## **Syria**

Disputes with Syria date back to the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne that granted the City of Alexandretta (Hatay) to Turkey. Syria recently pressured Turkey

from the South by providing support and safe haven to the PKK. Turkey responded with threats of military intervention and threatened to cut off water from the Euphrates River by the Southeast Anatolian Project (GAP). Fearing a combination of military action and restricted water, Syria capitulated and allowed the extradition of PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan.<sup>[29]</sup> Turkey's water projects are a major issue that has either the potential to bring peace and stability to the region or may become another source of tension and conflict. Turkey's dam projects on the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers and their tributaries directly affect the water flow to Syria and Iraq, and may have adverse consequences to Jordan and Israel.<sup>[30]</sup> Jordan claims that water alone is an issue that could cause them to go to war. Water is also tied to the Israeli–Syrian peace negotiations over the Golan Heights. Syria's goal is for Israel to withdraw so they can claim the ample water resources available from underground aquifers in the area. Turkey, however, has made it clear that it will sell water to points south, but will not subsidize water to Syria in compensation for lost territory to Israel.<sup>[31]</sup> It is currently not clear what direction the new President Bashar al-Asad will take his nation. It is hoped that his education and appeal to the West will facilitate peace with Israel and economic growth for the region.

## Israel

Turkey has countered the Syria and Greece pressure by establishing a

strategic partnership with Israel. Turkey originally set conditions for close ties in 1949 as the first Muslim state to formerly recognize Israel.<sup>[32]</sup> The two states signed a Military Cooperation Agreement in 1996 that established a venue to share intelligence, and sale of aircraft and weapons in support of Turkey's modernization program. Turkey also supports Israel with air space and ranges for air force training exercises. Both nations exchange military officers to observe training, and conduct an annual combined air and sea rescue exercise designated as Operation Reliant Mermaid. Israel and Turkey have also established a Free Trade Agreement that has potential to provide billions in trade through computers, industrial products, and tourism. Additionally, the influential Israeli lobby has helped Turkey in the U.S. Congress over human rights issues, and acts as a counter to the strong pressure by the Greek and Armenian lobby.<sup>[33]</sup>

## **Greece**

Relations between Greece and Turkey have improved somewhat; however, distrust and animosity still prevails over the Greek invasion in 1919 and issues regarding Cyprus. Greece now threatens Turkey's lines of communications with a military buildup in Cyprus in support of the Greek majority and by claims of air space and territorial waters surrounding the Aegean Islands. The last military confrontation was in 1974 when Turkey deployed forces to protect Turkish minorities from oppression. Turkish forces remain

today in the northern minority enclave, and Greece has maintained tensions by the recent deployment of missiles and modernization of the Cypriot military. Greek initiatives regarding Aegean waters and continental shelf could have major security and economic consequences on Turkey. Greece is attempting to extend its sovereign waters around each island from six to twelve miles as allowed by the Law of Seas Treaty, and seeks to claim the continental shelf around each Aegean Island. Turkey refuses to recognize the treaty, and claims half of the continental shelf for purposes of oil exploration.<sup>[34]</sup> Other than the danger of a confrontation by increased military buildup on Cyprus, these disputes are being handled in the diplomatic arena. Greece does hold a trump card by having veto power over Turkey's membership in the European Union.

## **European Union**

Turkey considers membership in the European Union (EU) as a vital economic interest. The EU is making membership difficult based on documented human rights abuses caused mainly by the Turkish government's campaign against the PKK. The Turks perception is that the EU decision is based on ethnic and religious grounds and views the EU as a 'Christian Club'. The Turks also believe they should be rewarded by Europe for services rendered during the Cold War by protecting Europe's Southern flank against Soviet aggression with the second largest NATO force. The bottom line is that Turkey believes Europe

owes them, and that payment should be rendered with European markets. This perception and animosity continues in light of their continued support of UN sanctions against Iraq and recent support to peacekeeping missions in the Balkans. The most likely cause of European reservation is fear of competition with the Turks, especially the rich agricultural potential of the Anatolia region.[\[35\]](#)

Turkey's current economy also makes EU membership unlikely. It is surviving, however, it remains plagued by inflation and mismanagement. Some of the problems stem from the early days of the Ottoman Empire when the Greeks and Armenians managed the banks and businesses while Turks performed manual labor. Upon gaining independence, Ataturk nationalized all businesses and industry and placed inexperienced Turks in executive positions without experience. Political coalitions and infighting are also responsible because of failure to develop long-term economic plans. This coupled by the deficit from state subsidized industry causes a loss of confidence in foreign investment. Other challenges of the economy are centered on the \$7 billion a year war against the PKK, devaluation of the lira, and capital flight during the 1990's. Turkey's main effort to correct the problem should be on efficient tax collection and reduction of the deficit.[\[36\]](#) In the meantime, lucrative earnings from tourism and trade with Israel, especially in textiles will continue to prop up Turkey's economy awaiting

more open European markets.

## **Turkey's National Interests**

Its father Ataturk established Turkey's national interests and foreign policy. His stated goal was "peace at home and peace in the world". His vision was supported by a security policy built around four basic principles tied to security and economic interests: the declared promise against an aggressive hegemonic intent beyond its borders; strong internal defense and protection of sovereign borders by maintaining a professional army; regional security alliances and cooperation; and international acceptance with strong ties to the West. [\[37\]](#)

Turkey's current national interest remains consistent with those stated by Ataturk in the 1920s. The vital security interests today remain the preservation of national and territorial integrity, maintenance of secularism, and friendly relations with neighbors. The most vital security interest is to safeguard Kemalism ideology, which is considered the center of gravity of the republic's existence.

[\[38\]](#)

Economic vital interests are maintenance of western relationships and acceptance of membership into the European Union. The current pursuit to build an oil and natural gas pipeline from Baku to Ceyhan is also considered a vital economic and security objective, as Turkey is solely dependent on imported oil.

[39] Additionally, Turkey holds the key to water resources of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers that is critical to the rich agricultural resources of Anatolia and has enormous economic potential for the entire Middle East region. Turkey's Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) and hydroelectric dam construction on the headwaters of these rivers is also defined as a vital economic objective. Historical animosity and a misunderstanding of the potential economic and security benefits of GAP further exasperates relations with other nations whose survival depends on these rivers.

### **Perceived Threats and Opportunities**

The Turks have bordered on paranoia for centuries believing both internal and foreign enemies would weaken and divide Turkey and threaten their survival. Turkey's leadership today continues to define militant Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism within the state as a major threat to the regime. Policy makers also believe that Turkey faces both conventional and transnational threats that seek to disrupt her territorial sovereignty either with conventional forces across Turkey's borders or from terrorist and unconventional infiltration with outside support from hostile governments. Their most dangerous scenario is a combination of both threats simultaneously that are sparked by a regional or ethnic conflict. Although state sponsored enemies include Russia, Iraq, and Iran, Turkey is most concerned with Greece and Syria. [40] The Aegean Islands could

serve as a foothold for another Greek invasion of Turkey or threaten the Port of Ismir. [\[41\]](#) As outlined above, the worst case would involve a Greek attack in conjunction with Syria pressure from the South by ground or missile attack or through support to insurgencies.

### **Turkey's New National Security Strategy**

Turkey's military and civilian leadership is currently attempting to build consensus for a new national security strategy. Their current national military strategy remains structured around Cold War/NATO requirements. Accordingly, the Turkish Army and Air Force would defend in depth with a planned counterattack to block an armor and mechanized penetration in the east and south. Army and police forces would be committed to conduct counterinsurgency operations and protect key facilities and infrastructure. The Navy's mission is to defend the Straits and prevent coastal infiltration. [\[42\]](#) Although this current strategy is conducted only within Turkey's borders, indications are that Turkey's new strategy may be moving in a direction that advocates modernization of the military with a capability to conduct operations beyond her territorial borders. Chief of the General Staff, General Huseyan Kivrikoglu made recent comments that it was imperative for Turkey "to develop capabilities for forward engagement and forward defense and be prepared to preempt threats before they cross into

[\[43\]](#)



Turkish territory.” Turkey’s formal military training and education

agreement with Israel in February 1996 was the first step toward military modernization and was based on the belief that “. . . both secular-democratic countries face the same strategic threats.”[\[44\]](#)

In 1998 Turkey’s National Security Council published a White Paper on security policy that stressed modernization of the military, and appropriated \$150 billion on defense over thirty years. Additionally, this policy stressed the importance of modernizing and moving from a littoral to blue water navy capability in order to deter future aggression, especially from the vulnerable Aegean. Turkey is also looking for potential sellers of modern frigates and submarines in order to protect its commercial trade routes in the Aegean and Mediterranean. [\[45\]](#) This will become even more critical with the planned Ceyhan oil pipeline terminal. As part of the 1996 Israeli Security Cooperation agreement, Turkey plans on purchasing main battle tanks, and surface to air missiles from Israel, and awarded contracts for Israel to modernize Turkey’s aging F-4 and F-5 fleet of aircraft.[\[46\]](#)

Although it is apparent that Turkey is searching for a coherent national security strategy, all will be in vane unless Turkey makes a concerted effort with reforms in human rights and Kurd issues that in turn will make it easier domestically for the U.S. to reengage and assist in support of U.S. national interests.

## **United States Interests**

Prior to the end of the Cold War, the United States was actively engaged in assisting Turkey with her security and economic development. The Reagan and Bush Administrations promised additional support to include compensation for its economic loss while supporting the Gulf War. Both Administrations understood Turkey's importance as a means of keeping Russia in check as well as countering Islamic fundamentalism. Turkey was also expected to establish solid relationships with Egypt and with Israel and provide stability to the Peace Process. The new Clinton Administration, however, was focused on domestic problems, and combined with human rights abuses reported during their campaign against the PKK, Turkey lost military aid and promised economic assistance.<sup>[47]</sup> Without U.S. financial backing, Turkey then aligned itself with Israel in order to enhance her strategic importance in the eyes of the West and to take advantage of economic opportunities.

The current U.S. policy with Turkey is based on a five point agenda of shared interests agreed upon by President Clinton and Prime Minister Ecevit in 1999. Security interests were defined as strengthening security ties; collaborating for regional stability; and reducing Aegean and Cyprus tensions with Greece. The two nations agreed to economic interests as strategic energy cooperation and boosting trade and investment opportunities.<sup>[48]</sup> The U.S. has assisted Turkey economically through the IMF and World Bank, and established a Joint

Economic Commission in 1993 that resulted in the U.S. becoming one of Turkey's largest export markets.<sup>[49]</sup> The U.S. has also attempted to gain a foothold for Turkey's membership in the EU and was successful in influencing Turkey's acceptance to the Customs Union in December 1995. Despite Turkey's membership in the Council of Europe, and OECD, issues concerning human rights and Greek veto power continue to block their entrance into the EU.<sup>[50]</sup>

Besides the obvious interests shared by both nations, U.S. policy makers must analyze Turkey's strategic significance in relation to U.S. interests, and establish a specific strategy that addresses mutual security and economic interests against those of other nations and threats in the region. American strategists must realize that Turkey is a strong counter balance to militant Islamic states in the region, and continues to hold extensive political and military clout in the region. The U.S. may discover Turkey's clout to indirectly influence the Arab-Israeli Peace Process. It was in 1997 that Turkey was the only Muslim state to receive a joint Israeli-Palestinian request to provide peacekeeping forces to monitor the Hebron redeployment.<sup>[51]</sup> Turkey has also approached both Israeli and Palestinian officials with an offer of assistance and ideas that according to the U.S. State Department have viable potential.<sup>[52]</sup>

There is some belief that Turkey has lost its strategic importance;

however, it would not be in the U.S. interests for a Kefauver type Islamic government to closely align itself with either Iran or Iraq. Prime Minister Erbakan came close to pursuing this a decade ago mainly out of economic frustration. It should be remembered that Turkey's support to the coalition during the Gulf War and subsequent UN sanctions cost Turkey billions in lost oil and trade. In addition, the U.S. cannot afford to lose Turkey's influence over the new Trans-Caucasus states that now offer rich oil and natural gas resources as well as an alternate route of these resources from Russia.<sup>[53]</sup> Turkey's influence over Muslims in the region and potential to generate billions of dollars in trade as referred to by the World Bank as an "emerging giant", are sufficient reasons alone to warrant special attention by the U.S.<sup>[54]</sup>

Turkey believes it has carried its weight and the weight of others in promoting peace and stability in the region since joining NATO in 1952. Ironically, Turkey continues to provide support and stability to U.S. and European interests regardless of their perceptions of broken promises. One of the first policy actions of the new administration should be to assure Turkey of her strategic importance and that it is imperative that she continue to serve as an anchor of both NATO's and Europe's southern flank.<sup>[55]</sup> It is disappointing that Secretary of State Colin Powell's first trip to the Middle East region does not include Turkey.

President Bush's Administration must also assist Turkey in developing a plan

with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund for foreign investment and credits that will enable her to recover from the trade deficit and lost revenue as a result of supporting the UN sanctions against Iraq.<sup>[56]</sup> Washington must use quiet diplomacy with Turkey to address issues such as civil-military relations and human rights. Bilateral military education of Turkey's officer Corps in U.S. institutions would have a gradual effect of broadening officers' view of the benefits of a pluristic society and separation of powers. Additionally, the U.S. should provide training and assistance to the military and police regarding the legitimate use of force based on the elements of Jus in Bello and Jus ad Bellum. This may further be assisted in combining efforts of the State Department and U.S. European Command in exchange programs of civilian and military officials that educate and strengthen the judicial system.

We must assist and back Turkey regarding challenges with neighbors. It should be made clear to Syria that state sponsored terrorism or support to terrorist organizations such as the PKK will not be tolerated. In exchange, the U.S. could assist in negotiations regarding water and trade opportunities. This same exchange could also take place with Iraq and Iran upon regime change and or improved international standards of conduct. Turkey's relationship with Israel should continue to be applauded and further strengthened. This is viable through military exercises and exchanges between Turkey, Israel, and the United States

beyond the scope of Operation Reliant Mermaid. Jordan and even Saudi Arabia and Egypt could potentially be included in this military relationship, especially if focused on humanitarian or peacekeeping type operations. It is in the best interests of all the above nations to form a coalition that shares information and intelligence regarding transnational terrorism and crime. This type of cooperation could have a positive effect of reducing the type violence currently preventing Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.

The U.S. can ill afford to lose an opportunity to develop the Trans-Caucasus and wean the new states away from dependence and influence of Russia. It is critical to U.S. interests that Turkey continues to improve relations with Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. A key economic and security objective in this triad is to support the construction of the gas-oil pipeline from Baku through Georgia and then out through the Turkish port of Ceyhan on the Mediterranean. Failure to secure political and economic support for this pipeline could result in Russia or Iran striking a deal to extricate and transport the oil north to the Black Sea or south through the Gulf. Although historical animosity will probably prevent a close relationship between Turkey and Armenia, it is important that Russian influence be diluted through economic ties between the two nations. The U.S. can assist by pressuring Russia to cease its support to separatists movements in Georgia and Armenia. [\[57\]](#)

Policymakers must also exploit the opportunity for Turkey to provide water as a means to stabilize and further integrate many Middle East countries. Although Syria and Iraq both believe Turkey is using the water issue as a political weapon, proper diplomacy could turn this issue into an advantage for the entire region. A recent study conducted by the Harvard Middle East Water Project concluded that making water an economic interest rather than a security interest has potential to integrate and bring nations closer. The study pointed out that current water agreements stipulated by the Oslo II negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians would become a crisis by 2010.[\[58\]](#) Tensions over water will continue to get worse and could lead to war, especially with Syria and Jordan.

Washington should assist Turkey with further development of the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) with intent to provide agriculture products and ample clean water resources to the West Bank, Jordan, and as far South as Saudi Arabia. Syria could also be included depending on their agreement to cease support of terrorism. Although Turkey's GAP water project is causing tension by allegedly restricting the flow of water along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, a case can be made that GAP is necessary to manage upstream resources that in turn provide agriculture, water, and energy requirements for the entire region. A 1996 study conducted by engineers at the University of Texas concluded that

Turkey's GAP will efficiently manage and control highly variant flows and will provide 76 percent of the water to downstream countries. The project has potential to increase the agriculture and industrial productivity of the entire region by approximately five times its current output.<sup>[59]</sup> The GAP initiative will also provide employment for the Kurds, which would greatly contribute to stability in Southeast Turkey and along the borders with Syria and Iraq.

The U.S. must also look closely at Turkey's potential to offer water in exchange for peace. Turkey has made statements that it is not interested in subsidizing the peace process, but their late President Ozal offered the construction of two water pipelines to divert water directly to Syria, Jordan, Israel, and to Saudi Arabia in the name of peace and stability.<sup>[60]</sup> Perhaps we could negotiate with the Turkish government to dust off this old Ozal plan and offer economic and military assistance in exchange for a pipeline for peace project.

## Conclusion

Turkey's current chances of membership in the European Union and ability to frame a coherent national security strategy will be extremely difficult without constitutional reforms. Nationalism as established by Ataturk was viewed as essential to unifying the new republic following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and to guard against domestic unrest making the state vulnerable to outside aggression. Atatuk's legacy, however, now " . . . serves as a straight



jacket that holds Turkey back”.<sup>[61]</sup> Although it is in the best interest of the U.S. for Turkey to remain a secular state and to keep militant Islamic political leaders at bay, Turkey must make reforms that place the military subordinate to civilian-political leadership.

Turkey might do well to approach the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by using the elements of the Clausewitz Trinity. The “paradoxical trinity” where the military is subordinate to the civilian government, and both must work in unity and cooperation with the people is the essence of democracy.<sup>[62]</sup> The United States should take advantage of the trust and confidence with Turkey to assist with constitutional reforms that address civil-military and human rights issues. In exchange for agreeing to undergo such reform, the U.S. could assist with modernizing Turkey’s armed forces and continue to lobby and advocate their membership into the European Union. Education and reform as outlined here is not a quick solution and may take years to convince Turkey’s leaders that strength in diversity and through separation of powers will promote greater internal security and prosperity. Failure of Turkey to address these reforms could continue to breed religious and ethnic animosity that truly threatens the state.

## **Endnotes**

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[62] The Clausewitz Trinity application to Turkey was derived from the article by Gabriel Marcella and Donald Schulz, "Colombia's Three Wars: U.S. Strategy at the Crossroads", 29-33.